

From Science to Consciousness: Why do We Need Clean Water

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Abstract. The World Water Day, promoted by the UN, is celebrated annually on 22nd of March. The date aims to draw the world attention to the urgent need to preserve and save water, a valuable and increasingly scarce natural resource. In 2014, on behalf of the motto "Water and Energy ", the STOL project has considered important to reflect on water uses and to raise awareness towards a more rational use of this finite resource. With this goal, 17 illustrative artworks of a certain object and the correspondent Water Footprint (WF),

translated in sets of bottles symbolizing the corresponding water volume, were strategically placed in several locations at Campus de Gualtar, Universidade do Minho (UMinho) and in Library Lúcio Craveiro da Silva (BLCS) in Braga.

The WF is an indicator of the direct and indirect use of fresh water by a consumer or a producer. The WF of an individual or an object is thus defined as the total volume of fresh water needed to produce goods and services consumed by the individual, or to produce the referred object. The value is usually high and causes some amazement and disbelief among non-specialized public.

The STOL initiative, included in the UN official website, was exhibited during eight days and intended to sensitize the academic community and the BLCS customers for their involvement in reducing the WF of goods, and for a commitment to more sustainable water consumption. The artworks were designed taking into account the space where were placed, normally of great human turnout. Thus, a pair of sneakers and a training suit were hung in the Sports Pavilion, pictures of foods in the canteen; paper sheets and traditional recycled paper and mobile phones were placed at the General Library and BLCS; cups of coffee or

chocolate boxes were suspended together near the Bars and computer keyboards appeared at computer centres/labs.

This action, initially thought to be conducted at a few places at UMinho, was immediately extended to other areas upon request of several services and units of the institution.

Despite the difficulties in assessing the initiative, we can try to express its impact by estimating the number of individuals who have passed in such places, and by the instant success of the initiative and its echoes, which jumped the university walls and reached the regional press. Since then, several higher schools of the region are requesting the materials to reproduce the initiative in loco, to celebrate a multitude of events. In the present communication, a critical analysis of the initiative and its impacts will be performed.